

## **The Examiner's Guide to the Marine Mammal Stranding Report Level A Data**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to clarify protocol for completing the Marine Mammal Stranding Report (NOAA Form 89-864) in response to marine mammal stranding events in the United States. This measure will standardize the data sent to NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) from entities participating in the Stranding Network. Many of the fields on this form may have several interpretations. In order for NMFS to correlate the Level-A information on the forms with the NMFS National Marine Mammal Stranding Database System, please use this guide as the common convention in understanding and completing the Marine Mammal Stranding Report.

### **Background**

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Section 402, the Secretary (i.e., Secretary of Commerce - National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources ) is responsible for collecting information on strandings which the Secretary will compile and analyze, by region, to monitor species, numbers, conditions, and causes of illnesses and deaths of stranded marine mammals. The Secretary is also responsible for collection of information on other life history and reference level data, including marine mammal tissue analyses, that would allow comparison of the causes of illness and deaths in stranded marine mammals with physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters.

Specifically, the collection of this information is authorized and mandated under three provisions of the MMPA, 16 U.S.C. 1421. Under the MMPA, the Secretary is charged with the protection and management of marine mammals. In addition, determinations must be made on the sustainability of population stocks, on the impact of fisheries and other human activities on marine mammals and endangered species, and on the health of marine mammals and related environmental considerations. The NMFS has the responsibility to carry out these mandates. Section 402(b) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1421a) requires the Secretary to collect and update information on strandings. It further provides that the Secretary shall compile and analyze, by region, the species, numbers, conditions, and causes of illnesses and deaths in stranded marine mammals. Section 404 (a) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1421c) mandates that the Secretary respond to unusual marine mammal mortality events. Without a historical baseline provided by marine mammal information collected from strandings, detection of such events could be difficult and the investigation could be impeded. Section 404 (b) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1421c) requires NMFS to facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on the health of marine mammal populations in the wild and to correlate health with physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters. In order to perform this function, NMFS must standardize data collection protocols for health and correlations. Data and samples collected from stranded

animals are a critical part of the implementation of this mandate of the MMPA.

Registration of tissues retained from strandings is mandatory under 50 CFR 216.22(c). With limited exceptions, the MMPA prohibits the purchase or sale of marine mammals or marine mammal parts. It also prohibits the possession of marine mammals or marine mammal parts taken in violation of the Act. In order to provide adequate enforcement of the Act while still allowing legitimate activities, it is necessary to document the inventory of tissues that are legally held. The Marine Mammal Stranding Report form provides information which may be used for registration of marine mammal parts taken under stranding authority and for tracking of such legally obtained samples. The use of these forms assists us in standardizing this procedure.

The Marine Mammal Stranding Network (Network) is made up individuals authorized by NMFS [i.e., via Letter of Agreement (LOA) or another official agreement under §112(c) of the MMPA which allows the Secretary to enter into agreements in order to fulfill the general purposes of the Act] to collect scientific data and specimens, record information on stranding events with the NMFS Regional Coordinator, and assist local and Federal authorities in the response to stranded marine mammals under the MMPA, §109(h). They are also authorized in assisting with detection and investigation of marine mammal mortality events. The majority of Network members are affiliated with academic institutions, aquaria, rehabilitation centers, or state, federal, and local agencies. Members are requested to submit basic data on all strandings including date and location, species, condition of animal, sex of animal, length, disposition of the animal and tissues or specimens, and any personal observations. The Network members will complete the stranding form as part of their immediate response and forward the form to the NMFS regional coordinators in a timely manner, as specified in the LOA. Non-Governmental members of the Network are exempted from the prohibition on taking marine mammals through the issuance of Letters of Agreement under §112(c) of the MMPA which allows the Secretary to enter into agreements in order to fulfill the general purposes of the Act. Researchers may also obtain tissues from stranded marine mammals through the Network. The LOA relieves scientists and responders of the cumbersome process of applying for scientific research permits, but researchers must obtain an approval letter from the NMFS Regional Office, signed by the Regional Administrator, authorizing such collections.

## **Reporting**

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information, including completing the paper form and entering the information into the National Database. Response time to the stranded marine mammal is not included in this time, as a universal estimate is impossible to make. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources, Marine Mammal Conservation Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

Under the MMPA Section 409.3, a stranding is defined as an event in the wild where:

- (A) A marine mammal is dead and is -
  - (i) on a beach or shore of the United States; or
  - (ii) in waters under the jurisdiction of the United States (including any navigable waters); or
- (B) a marine mammal is alive and is -
  - (i) on a beach or shore of the United States and unable to return to the water;
  - (ii) on a beach or shore of the United States and, although able to return to the water, is in apparent need of medical attention; or
  - (iii) in the waters under the jurisdiction of the United States (including any navigable waters), but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance.

Level A data: Basic minimum data to be collected; corresponds to the information required on this stranding form. Collection of Level A data is mandatory for all members of the Network. This information is not considered proprietary and will be available to the public upon written request to the NMFS regional stranding coordinator. These data will be released provided that the requestor describe the intent of use of these data and credit the stranding network and NMFS in any publications.

Level B data: Supplemental or intermediate data to the Level A data that includes additional information about the stranding event and life history data. Examples of these type of data include: weather and tide conditions, offshore human/predator/prey activity, morphometrics, pre-stranding/stranding/rehabilitation behavior, stranding/rehabilitation health assessments, and life history samples (teeth, jaw, status of reproductive organs, stomach and intestinal contents, etc.).

Level C data: Detailed data and results from tissues collected for histopathology, toxicology, microbiology, virology, parasitology, etc. Level B and C data are proprietary and distribution of such information is under the discretion of the respondent or on-site coordinator in the case of an official unusual marine mammal mortality event.

Events other than those described above should be reported on a form other than the Level A Marine Mammal Stranding Report. For additional comments related to the Level A data, use the back of the Level A Data form, under “Additional Remarks”. The Marine Mammal Stranding

Report - Level A Data should be completed and sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator promptly following the examination of the animal (or as stated according to your LOA) to ensure that the data will be available in near real time, facilitating the efficient and appropriate management of marine mammal populations in accordance with the MMPA. If information regarding a stranding event is obtained after the Marine Mammal Stranding Report has been submitted to NMFS, please forward such information in a separate communication to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, referring to the stranding event's specific field number.

## HEADER

FIELD #:	____(1)____	NMFS REGIONAL #:	____(2)____ <small>(NMFS-USE)</small>	NATIONAL DATABASE#:	____(3)____ <small>(NMFS-USE)</small>
COMMON NAME:	____(4)____	GENUS:	____(5)____	SPECIES:	____(5)____
EXAMINER	Letterholder: _____(6)_____				
Name:	____(7)____	Affiliation:	____(8)____		
Address:	____(9)____	Phone:	____(10)____		

- (1) Assign each stranding event a unique identifier. Format is open to each agency's requirements; however, please remain consistent within your agency.
- (2) Leave this blank. NMFS will assign a regional number consistent with the National Marine Mammal Stranding Database.
- (3) Leave this blank. NMFS will assign a national database number consistent with the National Marine Mammal Stranding Database.
- (4) The common name of the stranded animal. If identity is not determined to species, list the extent to which you can classify it.
- (5) This is the Latin name for the animal in standard binomial nomenclature. If either genus or species is not identifiable, fill in the appropriate blank with "UNKNOWN."
- (6) Name of the holder of the NMFS Letter of Agreement (LOA), individual or organization, under whom the examiner is given legal authorization to "take" marine mammals under Section 112(c) of the MMPA.
- (7) Name of the examiner who is submitting the report. This should be the individual who is responsible for preparing the entire level A stranding report, not necessarily the note taker.
- (8) Affiliation of the examiner who is submitting the report. This could be the same as above (LOA holder), a Designee organization (designee of an LOA holder), the agency of a federal, state, or local government official authorized under Section 109(h) of the MMPA, Self, or Other.
- (9) Mailing address of the LOA organization.

(10) Daytime (Work) phone number where examiner may be reached for further comment.

NOTE: Please include only business addresses and phone numbers, to prevent the release of personal information to the public.

## LOCATION

<b>LOCATION</b>	
State: (1)	County: (1)
City: (1)	
Body of Water: (2)	
Locality Details: (3)	
Latitude: (4)	N <input type="checkbox"/> actual (5)
Longitude: (4)	W <input type="checkbox"/> estimated (5)
How lat/long determined (Check ONE):	
<input type="checkbox"/> GPS (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Map (6)
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet/Software (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Estimated (6)

- (1) The standard state, county, and city names for the stranding location. Fill state with “EZ” for floaters in U.S. territorial waters between 3 and 200 miles offshore. This should include burroughs, parishes, provinces, islands, commonwealths, and territories.
- (2) If the animal was found floating or initially sighted in water, fill in the ocean/sea/gulf/bay/inlet/estuary. If the animal was found on the shore of a body of water, fill it in here.
- (3) Using known landmarks, describe the precise locality where the animal was found. Compass bearings and relative distances are useful.
- (4) GPS coordinates are preferred; however, not everyone collects these data in the same format. This information can be entered using the following units: deg/min/sec; deg/min/decmin; or deg/decdeg. The abbreviations are as follows: deg.= degrees; min.= minutes; sec.= seconds; decmin.= decimal minutes; decdeg.= decimal degrees.  
  
\*Note: Negative longitude represents the Western Hemisphere, positive longitude represents the Eastern Hemisphere, negative latitude represents the Southern Hemisphere, and positive latitude represents the Northern Hemisphere.
- (5) Indicate if the latitude/longitude coordinates are exact or an estimated guess (based on previous strandings, known lat/longs for landmarks, etc.).
- (6) Indicate how the latitude/longitude coordinates were obtained: a handheld Global

Positioning System (GPS) unit used on the beach during the response, a software program or an internet website, or plotted on a map.



## OCCURRENCE DETAILS

<b>OCCURRENCE DETAILS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Restrand (1)	GE#: _____ (2) <small>(NMFS USE)</small>
<b>Group Event:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES (3) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (3)	
If Yes, Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Cow/Calf Pair (4) <input type="checkbox"/> Mass Stranding (4)    # Animals: __ (5) __ <input type="checkbox"/> actual (5) <input type="checkbox"/> estimated (5)	
<b>Findings of Human Interaction:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES (6) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (6) <input type="checkbox"/> Could not Be Determined (6)	
If Yes, Check one or more: <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Boat Collision (7) <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Shot (7) <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Fishery Interaction (7)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Other Human Interaction: _____ (8)	
Describe How Determined: _____ (9)	
Gear Collected? <input type="checkbox"/> YES (10) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (10)    Gear Disposition: _____ (11)	
<b>Other Findings upon Level A:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES (12) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (12) <input type="checkbox"/> CBD (12)	
If Yes, Check one or more: <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Illness (13) <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Injury (13)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Other Findings: _____ (14)	
Describe How Determined: _____ (15)	

The occurrence details helps define the reason for the response and details associated with the stranding event.

- (1)    Restrand - Check this box if the animal has previously stranded, either responded to by your organization or another. The animal may have tags from a rehabilitation facility, or may have recognizable and distinctive features. If this box is checked, you should indicate the previous numbers assigned to this animal (by your facility or others), if known, on the back of the form in the space marked "Additional Identifiers."
- (2)    GE # - Leave this blank. NMFS will assign a regional designation to represent the group event number.
- (3)    Was the animal part of a group event? A group event is a stranding event which involves two or more animals, either simultaneously or over a period of time.
- (4)    If you checked "Yes" in item (3), identify the type of group event. These designations are not exclusive: more than one option may be selected. A "cow/calf pair" would be two animals stranding where one is the mother and the other is the offspring (a mom/pup pair would also qualify). A "mass stranding" is 2 or more cetaceans that simultaneously strand, other than cow-calf pairs.

Animals may be involved in other types of group events that will be determined after the Level A data sheet is filled out and submitted. These animals will be assigned a “Group Event Number (GE#)” in the National Database by the Regional Stranding Coordinator. Examples of these types of events include:

- a “*hazmat or oil spill*” - any animal affected by a spill of oil or another hazardous material;
- a “*pre-event investigation*” - animals sampled after a group event is suspected, but before it has been officially designated as an Unusual Mortality Event by the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (WGMMUME);
- an “*unusual mortality event*” - any animal part of a die-off that has been officially designated as a UME by the WGMMUME; and
- a “*repeat event*” - animals stranding during a die-off that has been designated as a repeat event by the WGMMUME.

If you wish, you may update your Level A datasheet for your records to reflect the Group Event number that will be listed in the National Database after the Regional Stranding Coordinator has verified the entry.

- (5) If you checked “Yes” to mass stranding, indicate the number of cetaceans involved in the mass stranding, and whether this count is an “actual” or “estimate” count.
- (6) **Disclaimer: this field does not represent cause of stranding or cause of death. These data should not be used out of context or without verification.** Check “Yes” if there are any signs or evidence of human interaction with the animal, whether or not you believe they were the cause of death. If you check “Yes,” use the back of this form in ADDITIONAL REMARKS to further explain the nature of the injury and how it was assessed and determined to be human related. If possible, document injuries or marks with photographs or sketches/drawings. Describe the injury or mark, the type of fishing gear recovered, the location of any wounds (gunshot, fishing gaff, knife incision, line or net entanglement, etc.). Note any external markings or color patterns and if the injury or mark could be determined as antemortem or postmortem. Also, describe any relevant circumstances regarding the interaction (e.g., whether the interaction was witnessed). Check “No” if the animal was examined and there was no indication of human interaction. Check “Could not Be Determined (CBD)” if there is insufficient evidence to indicate: the animal was not thoroughly examined, the animal was too decomposed for a thorough examination, there may have been signs of something that may have been a human interaction but you can’t tell for sure, or the observer does not feel competent to determine this type of injury (do not guess).
- (7) If you checked “Yes” in Item (6), check the box that most accurately details the type of human interaction.
- Boat Collision - Check if there are any signs of boat or ship collision such as propeller wounds or blunt trauma from a boat hull.

- Shot - Check if there are any signs of gunshots. Add in the comments how this was determined (metal detector, bullet found, etc.)
  - Fishery Interaction - Check if there are any signs of fishery interaction such as wounds related to fishing gear, or fishing gear attached to the animal.
- (8) If you checked “Yes” in Item (6) and there were signs of human interactions other than those listed, please describe in this blank. List any other signs of human interaction such as ingested plastic, debris entanglement, wounds from other weapons besides firearms (arrows, harpoons, etc.), non-boat vessel related injuries (car or train collision, etc.), mutilation, etc. Use the back of this form under “Additional Remarks” to continue your description, if necessary.
  - (9) If you checked “Yes” in Item (6) please describe how the signs of human interaction were determined (i.e. external exam, internal exam, necropsy, etc.).
  - (10) Check “Yes” if you collected fishery gear from the animal (hook, line, net, etc.). Check “No” if you did not collect any gear, or if there was no gear to collect.
  - (11) If you checked “Yes” in Item (10), use this line to indicate what was done with that gear (i.e. sent to NMFS Enforcement or Regional Stranding Coordinator), or where the gear is housed.
  - (12) Check “Yes” if there are any signs or evidence of other (non-human related interaction) findings related to the stranding, whether or not you believe they were the cause of death; check “No” if there was no indication of other factors; check “CBD” if there is insufficient evidence to indicate. Non-human related injuries or disease may include injury, illness, wounds from beaching, conspecific interactions/aggression, interspecific interactions (predator attack), etc.
  - (13) If you checked “Yes” in Item (12), check the box that most accurately details the other factors.
  - (14) If you checked “Yes” in Item (12) and there were other findings other than those listed, please describe in this blank. Use the back of this form under “Additional Remarks” to continue your description, if necessary.
  - (15) If you checked “Yes” in Item (12) please describe how the signs of other findings (non-human related) were determined (i.e., external exam, internal exam, necropsy, etc.).

## INITIAL OBSERVATION

<b>INITIAL OBSERVATION</b>	
Date: Year: <u>  (1)  </u> Month: <u>  (1)  </u> Day: <u>  (1)  </u>	
First Observed: <input type="checkbox"/> Beach or Land (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Floating (2) <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming (2)	
<b>STATUS</b> (Check ONE) (3)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Alive	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Advanced decomposition
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Fresh dead	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Mummified/Skeletal
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Moderate decomposition	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Unknown

- (1) Enter the date upon which the stranded animal was first observed by any witness. This is the first known observation of the stranded animal.
- (2) Check the appropriate box that indicates the how the animal was initially observed: on the land or beach, floating (in the water), or swimming.
- (3) Check the appropriate box that indicates the physical state of the animal or carcass on the date of the initial observation:
  - Alive: Check this box if the animal was alive at the initial observation.
  - Fresh Dead: Check this box if the carcass was in good condition (fresh/edible). Normal appearance, usually with little scavenger damage; fresh smell; minimal drying and wrinkling of skin, eyes and mucous membranes; eyes clear; carcass not bloated, tongue and penis not protruded; blubber firm and white; muscles firm, dark red, well-defined; blood cells intact, able to settle in a sample tube; serum unhemolyzed; viscera intact and well-defined, gut contains little or no gas; brain firm with no discoloration, surface features distinct, easily removed intact.
  - Moderate Decomposition: Check this box if the carcass was in fair condition (decomposed, but organs basically intact). Carcass intact, bloating evident (tongue and penis protruded) and skin cracked and sloughing; possible scavenger damage; characteristic mild odor; mucous membranes dry, eyes sunken or missing; blubber blood-tinged and oily; muscles soft and poorly defined; blood hemolyzed, uniformly dark red; viscera soft, friable, mottled, but still intact; gut dilated by gas; brain soft, surface features distinct, dark reddish cast, fragile but can usually be moved intact.
  - Advanced Decomposition: Check this box if the carcass was in poor condition (advanced decomposition). Carcass may be intact, but collapsed; skin sloughing;

epidermis of cetaceans may be entirely missing; often severe scavenger damage; strong odor; blubber soft, often with pockets of gas and pooled oil; muscles nearly liquefied and easily torn, falling easily off bones; blood thin and black; viscera often identifiable but friable, easily torn, and difficult to dissect; gut gas-filled; brain soft, dark red, containing gas pockets, pudding-like consistency.

- Mummified/Skeletal: Check this box if mummified or skeletal remains. Skin may be draped over skeletal remains; any remaining tissues are desiccated.
- Unknown: Check this box if unable to ascertain the condition of the stranded animal.

## LEVEL A EXAMINATION

<b>LEVEL A EXAMINATION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Able to Examine (4)
Year: <u>  (5)  </u> Month: <u>  (5)  </u> Day: <u>  (5)  </u>	
<b>CONDITION AT EXAMINATION</b> (Check ONE) (6)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Alive	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Advanced decomposition
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Fresh dead	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Mummified/Skeletal
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Moderate decomposition	

The Date of Examination box should reflect data from the day that the animal was responded to and examined by your organization to collect Level A data (location, condition, signs of human interaction, species, sex, age class, length, weight, and any other visual observations). Complete morphometrics and necropsy could be taken later.

- (4) Check this box if you were unable to examine the animal. Some examples would be: the animal was inaccessible (at the bottom of a cliff, on an island, floating, etc.); the animal washed out with the tide before you responded; manpower/time constraints made a response impossible; etc.
- (5) Enter the date when the Level-A examination was done.
- (6) Check the appropriate box that indicates the physical state of the animal (carcass) on the date of the Level-A examination:
- Alive: Check this box if the animal was alive during the Level-A examination.
  - Fresh Dead: Check this box if the carcass was in good condition (fresh/edible). Normal appearance, usually with little scavenger damage; fresh smell; minimal drying and wrinkling of skin, eyes and mucous membranes; eyes clear; carcass not bloated, tongue and penis not protruded; blubber firm and white; muscles firm, dark red, well-defined; blood cells intact, able to settle in a sample tube; serum unhemolyzed; viscera intact and well-defined, gut contains little or no gas; brain firm with no discoloration, surface features distinct, easily removed intact.
  - Moderate Decomposition: Check this box if the carcass was in fair condition (decomposed, but organs basically intact). Carcass intact, bloating evident (tongue and penis protruded) and skin cracked and sloughing; possible scavenger damage; characteristic mild odor; mucous membranes dry, eyes sunken or missing; blubber blood-tinged and oily; muscles soft and poorly defined; blood hemolyzed, uniformly dark red; viscera soft, friable, mottled, but still intact; gut dilated by gas; brain soft, surface features distinct, dark reddish cast, fragile but can usually be moved intact.

- Advanced Decomposition: Check this box if the carcass was in poor condition (advanced decomposition). Carcass may be intact, but collapsed; skin sloughing; epidermis of cetaceans may be entirely missing; often severe scavenger damage; strong odor; blubber soft, often with pockets of gas and pooled oil; muscles nearly liquefied and easily torn, falling easily off bones; blood thin and black; viscera often identifiable but friable, easily torn, and difficult to dissect; gut gas-filled; brain soft, dark red, containing gas pockets, pudding-like consistency.
- Mummified/Skeletal: Check this box if mummified or skeletal remains. Skin may be draped over skeletal remains; any remaining tissues are desiccated.

## INITIAL LIVE ANIMAL DISPOSITION

<b>INITIAL LIVE ANIMAL DISPOSITION</b> (Check one or more) (1)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Left at Site	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Transferred to Rehabilitation:	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Immediate Release at Site	Date: _____	Facility: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Relocated	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Disentangled	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Died during Transport	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Died at Site	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Euthanized during Transport	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Euthanized at Site	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Other: _____	
<b>CONDITION/DETERMINATION</b> (Check one or more) (2)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Sick	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Deemed Healthy	Location Hazardous:
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Abandoned/Orphaned	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. To animal
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Out of Habitat	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. To public
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Other: _____	
Comments: _____ (3)		
_____		

(1) Indicate what action(s) was/were taken to handle a live animal (NOTE: check all that apply at the time of completing the Level A examination):

- Left at Site: Check if the animal was reported, and was confirmed by a reliable source and acknowledged by the Regional Coordinator, but no response was made; or the animal was observed by the response team, but no other actions were taken.
- Immediate Release at Site: Check if the animal was reported and treated or evaluated, but was not removed from the site.
- Relocated: Check if the animal was evaluated or treated, was removed from the site of stranding, and was transported and released at another site without being admitted to an authorized rehabilitation facility.
- Euthanized at Site: Check if the animal was found alive but was euthanized by an authorized entity.
- Died at Site: Check if the animal was found alive and died before transport to an authorized rehabilitation facility or relocation.
- Transferred to Rehabilitation: Check if the animal was transported to an authorized rehabilitation facility.



- Fill in the date of the transfer
  - Fill in the name of the authorized rehabilitation facility to which the animal was transferred.
- **Died during Transport:** Check if the animal was found alive and died during transport to a care facility.
  - **Euthanized during Transport:** Check if the animal was found alive and was euthanized during transport to an authorized rehabilitation facility by an authorized entity.
- (2) Indicate the condition of the animal at the time of the response (NOTE: Check one or more). This question should help provide your reasoning for the disposition that was selected.
- **Sick:** Check if the animal appears sick or is behaving oddly, with no external signs of injury.
  - **Injured:** Check if the animal shows evidence of physical injury.
  - **Out of Habitat:** Check if the animal was found in area not typical for its species. This could include atypical location and time of year for its known life history.
  - **Deemed Healthy:** Check if the animal shows no outward signs of illness or injury.
  - **Abandoned/Orphaned:** Check if the animal is a cetacean calf found stranded on the beach without an adult female, or a pup/calf that has been monitored and determined to be abandoned. The length of time that the animal should be observed without intervention may be up to 48 hours and varies by region; check with your Regional Stranding Coordinator for your regional policy.
  - **Inaccessible:** Check if the animal is in an inaccessible location and therefore was not closely examined (condition could not be determined). Examples of inaccessible locations include: at the base of a cliff, areas with dangerous surf conditions, mudflats, islands, ice, etc.
  - **Location Hazardous to Animal:** Check if the animal is in a location that is deemed hazardous to its health and welfare (i.e. up a freshwater river, pinnipeds found inland, etc.)
  - **Location Hazardous to Public:** Check if the animal is in a location that is

deemed hazardous to the public (i.e. a crowded public beach, a marina, etc.)

- Unknown/CBD: Check if the animal could not be examined or if the condition could not be determined.
- Other: Describe any other situation not addressed above.

(3) Additional comments.

## MORPHOLOGICAL DATA

MORPHOLOGICAL DATA			
<b>SEX (Check ONE) (1)</b>		<b>AGE CLASS (Check ONE) (2)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Male	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Adult	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Pup/Calf
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Female		<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Subadult	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Unknown
		<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Yearling	
Straight Length: ____ (3) ____ <input type="checkbox"/> cm <input type="checkbox"/> in <input type="checkbox"/> actual <input type="checkbox"/> estimated			
Weight: ____ (4) ____ <input type="checkbox"/> kg <input type="checkbox"/> lb <input type="checkbox"/> actual <input type="checkbox"/> estimated			
<b>PHOTOS/VIDEOS TAKEN:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES (5) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (5)			
Photo/Video Disposition: ____ (6) ____			
_____			

- (1) Check the box indicating the animal's sex, or check "Unknown" if unable to determine.
- (2) Check the box indicating the animal's age class. If possible, use information based on teeth or accepted length/age data:
  - adult: This age class would be used for an animal that is judged or found upon necropsy to be sexually mature.
  - subadult: This age class would be used for a animal that is judged to be greater than one year old, but not yet mature.
  - yearling: This age class would be used for an animal that is judged to be approximately one year old, using length or time of year.
  - pup/calf: This age class would be used for a stranded animal that is smaller than yearling size, or in a population where it would be younger than one year old.
  - unknown: This age class would be used for an animal if you are unable to determine its age.
- (3) In centimeters (**the metric system is preferred.**) or inches, fill in the straight length (not contoured) of the animal on the date of initial examination. Please check if this was an actual (physical measurement) or estimated (visual measurement) measurement. If the carcass is not intact (e.g. flukes degraded or severed), check "estimated."
- (4) Enter the weight of the animal in kilograms or pounds on the date of initial examination. Please check if this was an actual or estimated measurement. The metric system is preferred.
- (5) Check "Yes" or "No" to indicate whether visual media was taken of this stranding event.

- (6) If photos or video were taken of the event, use this line to indicate where these documents are housed.

## TAG DATA

TAG DATA				
Tags were:				
Pre-existing (Present at Time of Stranding):		<input type="checkbox"/> YES (1) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (1)		
Applied during Stranding Response:		<input type="checkbox"/> YES (2) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (2)		
ID # (3)	Color (4)	Type (5)	Placement * (6)	Applied (7) Present (8)
_____			(Circle ONE) D DF L LF LR RF RR	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
_____			D DF L LF LR RF RR	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
_____			D DF L LF LR RF RR	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

\* D = Dorsal; DF = Dorsal Fin; L = Lateral Body  
LF = Left Front; LR = Left Rear; RF = Right Front; RR = Right Rear

- (1) Mark if tags were pre-existing (present on the animal at the time of stranding).
- (2) Mark if tags were applied by the stranding response organization (i.e. prior to release at stranding or relocation site, to prevent a carcass from being double-counted, etc.).

NOTE: If no tags were present or applied, the responder should check “NO” for both boxes and skip the rest of the section.

If tags were present or applied, specifically identify for each row,

- (3) Write the number(s) of the identifying tag(s), brand(s), or other applied marking(s), if applicable.
- (4) Using basic color-names, indicate the identifying color of tags where applicable.
- (5) List the type of tag, brand, or other applied marking. For example, radio, PIT, plastic, roto, spaghetti, satellite, freeze brand, bleach mark, paint, etc.
- (6) NOTE: Circle (ONE) the location of each applied/present marking:
  - D = dorsal
  - DF = dorsal fin
  - L = lateral body
  - LF = left front flipper/appendage
  - LR = left rear flipper/appendage
  - RF = right front flipper/appendage
  - RR = right rear flipper/appendage

- (7) Check “Applied” if the tags, brands, or other makings were attached to the animal by the stranding response organization for identification after the animal stranded, as part of the stranding or rescue response. If the animal was rehabilitated and released with tags or markings, you may update this part of the Level A form after they are applied.
- (8) Check “Present” if tags, brands, or other markings were already present when the animal stranded.

## CARCASS/SPECIMEN DISPOSITION

<b>WHOLE CARCASS DISPOSAL</b> (Check one or more) (1)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Left at site	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Towed: Lat _____ Long _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Landfill
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Buried	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Sunk: Lat _____ Long _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Unknown
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Rendered	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Frozen for Later Examination	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Other: _____
<hr/>		
<b>SPECIMEN DISPOSITION</b> (Check one or more) (2)		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Scientific collection		
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Educational collection		
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Other: _____		
Comments: _____ (3) _____		
<hr/>		
<b>NECROPSIED</b> (4) <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO Date: _____		
<b>NECROPSIED BY:</b> _____ (5) _____		

(1) Check the following boxes to indicate how the carcass was disposed:

- Left at site - Check this box if the carcass, including skeleton, was left where it was found to decompose.
- Buried - Check this box if most of the carcass, including skeleton, was buried.
- Rendered - Check this box if the carcass, including skeleton, was rendered.
- Towed - Check this box if the carcass, including skeleton, was towed to sea. Fill in the latitude and longitude of the position where the carcass was left.
- Sunk - Check this box if the carcass, including skeleton, was sunk. Fill in the latitude and longitude of the position where the carcass was sunk.
- Frozen for later examination - Check this box if all or most of the carcass and/or skeleton was retained and frozen for later examination.
- Landfill - Check this box if the carcass, including skeleton, was sent to a landfill or other waste facility.
- Unknown - Check this box if the fate of the carcass is unknown or if the carcass was lost.

(2) Check the following boxes to indicate where specimens of the carcass were distributed:

- Scientific collection - check this box if specimens from the live animal or carcass

were retained for scientific research.

- Educational collection - check this box if specimens from the live animal or carcass were retained for educational purposes.
  - Other - check this box if the fate of specimens from the live animal or carcass was other than that above and briefly indicate the disposition.
- (3) List comments regarding disposition of the specimen (i.e., identifying which tissues were collected/kept, differentiating where tissues were sent, etc.).
  - (4) Indicate whether a full necropsy was undertaken to obtain Level-C data and the date when the necropsy was done.
  - (5) List the name and contact information of the primary person/facility who conducted the necropsy.



## **BACK OF FORM**

**ADDITIONAL IDENTIFIERS:** Include any additional information related to the Field ID number or identification of the stranding event. Examples include: previous field ID numbers if this animal previously stranded; ID numbers assigned by other organizations (including authorized rehabilitation facilities to which the animal is transferred), former identification numbers from scientific research projects, etc.

**ADDITIONAL REMARKS:** Include additional identifiers, comments, and list other data sheets that may have been completed such as human interaction, morphometrics, necropsy, rehabilitation disposition, etc. Include further details or comments on any of the Level A data fields from the front of the sheet.